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# The Proposed
# CALIFORNIA DESERT PLAN

*September 1980*

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

#1570094398 ID: 88077787

# CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA

## Proposed Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement

The Bureau of Land Management's Proposed California Desert Plan is the next-to-last step in one of the most far-reaching planning efforts ever undertaken in the United States. The goal of the plan is to provide for the use and protection of the public lands and resources of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) into the 21st Century.

The final step will be review and approval of the management plan for the California Desert by the Secretary of the Interior in December 1980. Completion of the plan will culminate more than a decade of work by the Bureau of Land Management, user groups, and members of Congress.

The proposed plan responds to the direction of Congress in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) to "prepare and implement a comprehensive, long-range plan for the management, use, development and protection of the public lands within the California Desert Conservation Area." The Act said the desert should be managed "within the framework of a program of multiple use and sustained yield, and the maintenance of environmental quality."

The proposed plan and final environmental impact statement (EIS) are built on a solid foundation of public involvement. BLM distributed 18,000 copies of the draft planning alternatives and EIS; and nearly 9,000 individuals, organizations, and agencies submitted comments during the 90-day public review early in 1980. More than 900 people attended a series of public meetings held at 12 locations throughout California, and 355 of them made statements which also were used in preparing the proposed plan.

## DRAFT

Four draft alternative plans were issued for public review and comment on February 15, 1980. BLM did not present a preferred alternative because it was seeking to use

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Four draft alternative plans were issued for public review and comment on February 15, 1980. BLM did not present a preferred alternative because it was seeking to use public input to build the proposed plan. There were three action alternatives — protection, use, and balanced — and a "no action" alternative designed to serve as a baseline measuring impacts of the other alternatives.

## PLAN COMPONENTS

The principal components of the proposed California Desert Plan are a series of multiple-use classes which provide direction for management on a geographic basis; plan elements which provide more detailed direction on issues of major public concern; and areas of critical environmental concern, or ACECs, which deal with site-specific concerns. The multiple-use classes are based on resource values, capabilities and sensitivities. Each class has a set of resource management guidelines which specify the type and degree of use appropriate to that class.

## MULTIPLE-USE CLASSES

The multiple-use classes are:

**C — Controlled Use:** This class is designed to preserve and protect wilderness values in areas that meet the criteria of the Wilderness Act of 1964. It is the most preservation-oriented and restrictive of the four classes.

**L — Limited Use:** This class gives priority protection to sensitive natural, scenic, ecological, and cultural resources while placing limitations on other uses that may conflict with or degrade these values. It is the second most restrictive and protection-oriented of the classes.

**M — Moderate Use:** This class provides for a wide variety of present and future uses under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of renewable resources. It provides for tradeoffs between cases where conflicts occur and for mitigation of damages caused by permitted uses.

**I — Intensive Use:** This class is designed to provide use of lands and resources to meet human demands. It permits intensive land uses with reasonable mitigation and protection of sensitive resource values through rehabilitation when necessary. It is the most comsumptive use-oriented class.

## ELEMENTS

The next major component is plan elements, which constitute decisions or guidelines on major issues and provide a greater level of detail than the multiple-use classes and resource management guidelines for each class. The elements are: cultural resources; Native Americans; wildlife; vegetation; wilderness; wild horse and burro; livestock grazing; recreation; motorized vehicle access; geology, energy, and mineral resources; energy production and utility corridors; and land tenure adjustment.

The elements provide information about the nature and location of a resource or activity, and the type and degree of allowed land use and resource management activities for a number of resource values and uses.

## ACECs

The third major plan component — areas of critical environmental concern — focuses special effort at the site of a rare or valuable resource. ACECs identify and protect significant natural and cultural resources on public lands in the desert; provide for other uses in designated special areas where they are compatible with the protection and enhancement of the resources; and allow BLM to systematically monitor the protection of the resources and the compatibility with other allowed uses. Management prescriptions are provided for each of the ACECs.

Each of the three action alternatives in the draft plan provided for 50 ACECs. The proposed plan contains 73 ACECs, totaling 574,000 acres in response to public input. In addition to ACECs, other special areas may be designated in the desert such as national historic trails, research natural areas, and outstanding natural areas.

## MAJOR ISSUES

The extensive public review of the draft alternatives identified seven major public issues which are addressed in the Proposed California Desert Plan.

These are: Motor vehicle access to the Desert; wilderness and ACECs; impacts on wildlife and cultural resources; mining; wild horses and burros; forage allocations among wildlife, domestic livestock and burros; and implementation of the plan.

In addressing these issues, and solutions to the problems they pose, BLM made numerous substantive revisions of the proposed plan.

## ORGANIZATION

Another important step in preparing to implement the California Desert Plan was to establish a new BLM District covering the entire California Desert Conservation Area.

The boundaries of this California Desert District include Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties as well as those portions of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties lying west of the CDCA. The new District includes BLM's Riverside District and the portion of the Bakersfield District within the CDCA.

Headquarters of the California Desert District is in Riverside. Area offices are located at Ridgecrest, Barstow, Needles, Indio and El Centro. Public lands outside the CDCA will be administered by an area office to be established at Escondido.

## IMPLEMENTATION

A special section of the proposed California Desert Plan sets forth several methods of assuring that the plan is implemented on the ground, including budget, organization, personnel, intergovernmental coordination, and monitoring programs. It also provides a plan amendment process to provide flexibility to meet unanticipated demands and respond to future events.

## OTHER PROGRAMS

Other special programs are provided to meet other basic needs of the California Desert Conservation Area. These include the soil resources program, the air quality program, and the water resources program. These programs are designed to provide BLM managers with more and better information about the resources, to monitor the status of these resources, and to provide appropriate management.

# California Desert Conservation Area and Desert District

## CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA

Congress established the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) to provide "for the immediate and future protection and administration of the public lands of the California Desert within the framework of a program of multiple-use and sustained yield, and the maintenance of environmental quality."

The CDCA covers a region of 40,000 square miles of open space and wildland that is unique in its proximity to one of the world's major population centers as well as in the variety and extent of its cultural and natural resources.

Approximately half the Desert's 25 million acres is public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

The table below compares the proposed plan (in bold figures in the lefthand column) with the action alternatives of the draft plan. The amount and percentage of public land administered by BLM is shown for each of the four multiple-use classes in the Proposed Plan and for the protection, balanced, and use alternatives of the Draft Plan. All BLM-managed public lands are designated within one of the four multiple-use classes, except where land ownership patterns require a case-by-case evaluation.

**ALTERNATIVE COMPARISONS**
**(Acreage in millions of acres)**

| Class | **Proposed** | | Protection | | Balanced | | Use | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Acres** | **Percent** | Acres | Percent | Acres | Percent | Acres | Percent |
| C | **2.07** | **17.1%** | 5.22 | 43.0% | 1.83 | 15.1% | .60 | 5.0% |
| L | **5.94** | **49.0%** | 5.94 | 49.0% | 5.26 | 43.4% | 2.07 | 17.0% |
| M | **3.33** | **27.4%** | .55 | 4.6% | 4.33 | 35.7% | 7.47 | 61.6% |
| I | **.50** | **4.1%** | .14 | 1.2% | .42 | 3.4% | 1.69 | 13.9% |
| Unclassified | **.30** | **2.4%** | .28 | 2.2% | .30 | 2.4% | .30 | 2.5% |
| TOTAL | | **100%** | | 100% | | 100% | | 100% |

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation was an integral part of developing the Proposed California Desert Plan. A focal point for this effort has been the California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee. The hard-working citizens panel held 21 meetings attended by some 3,000 people from its inception in 1977 through preparation of the proposed plan. The advisory committee provided invaluable assistance to BLM in developing planning concepts; refining resource guidelines, elements and allocations; and preparing to implement the plan.

Persons who wish to comment on the proposed plan and final environmental impact statement should plan to attend one of the 12 briefing-hearing sessions to be held throughout the state between October 14 and 22, 1980. They also should obtain a copy of the plan from BLM.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people.

California Desert Plan
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